



VERMONT

COMPREHENSIVE TOBACCO CONTROL

PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM

Every year 1,000 Vermonters die from tobacco-related illness. Cigarette smoking is becoming more popular among both young people and adults in Vermont. Additionally, nearly half (45%) of all Vermont smokers have children under age 17 living in their household.

EVIDENCE THAT PREVENTION WORKS

Aggressive and comprehensive tobacco control programs in California, Florida, Massachusetts, and Oregon have produced substantial declines in rates of cigarette use. In California, home to one of the longest-running tobacco control programs, declines in rates of tobacco use have resulted in declines in rates of lung cancer and heart disease.

PROGRAM EXAMPLE

The CDC-supported Tobacco Control Program run by the Vermont Department of Health supports Vermont Kids Against Tobacco (VKAT). Over the past 5 years, children in VKAT groups in schools and other sites around the state have been devoted to keeping themselves and their peers tobacco-free. The tobacco control program is also sponsoring media campaign programs targeting young people, including an ongoing prevention-oriented campaign targeting young people ages 10–13 and a new social norms-oriented campaign designed to correct misconceptions about the prevalence of cigarette smoking among young people.

At least partly as a result of Vermont's efforts to prevent and control tobacco use, smoking rates decreased from 36% in 1997 to 22% in 2001 among Vermont's 8th through 12th graders. This is a drop of nearly 39% in 4 years. In addition, the Vermont legislature has passed a number of laws and policies to help reduce tobacco use by restricting smoking in the workplace, prohibiting the sale of tobacco products to people under 18, and banning smoking in the common areas of all enclosed indoor places of public access, including restaurants.

IMPLICATIONS

The continued success of Vermont's tobacco control efforts will require programs and policies that address the needs of Vermonters of all ages and all racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. As a result, the program staff at the Vermont Health Department will conduct special outreach training on tobacco control and prevention for members of low-income and minority groups.